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Differences between educational aspirations, expectations, and abilities of rural male seniors based upon their participation or non-participation in high school vocational agriculture programs were analyzed. Data were gathered from classroom questionnaires administered to 517 seniors, of whom 400 had had one or more years of vocational agriculture instruction and 117 had received no vocational agriculture instruction. Levels of significance were obtained by employing the chi-square statistical technique. Findings indicated: (1) A highly significant negative relationship was found between participants in vocational agriculture programs and educational aspirations, (2) Students participating in vocational agriculture were lower in educational abilities at a highly significant level, (3) More seniors in the vocational agriculture group than in the non-vocational agriculture group were older, resided on farms, and came from larger families with low or middle income, (4) More parents of vocational agriculture seniors exhibited low levels of formal education, (5) Seniors in both groups were influenced most in their educational aspirations by immediate members of their families, and (6) Students with relatively low educational aspirations and expectations were receiving little or no encouragement from the school atmosphere or their families to continue their formal education beyond high school. (DM)

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY

SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH CENTER

# EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS, EXPECTATIONS, AND ABILITIES OF RURAL MALE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS IN MISSISSIPPI

James F. Shill

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May, 1968

# EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS, EXPECTATIONS, AND ABILITIES OF RURAL MALE HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS IN MISSISSIPPI

by

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# PREFACE

The Social Science Research Center (SSRC) at Mississippi State University supports various projects in its program of research in OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION AND MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT. Each of these projects is focused upon the derivation of information that will be useful in the development of human resources. Information derived thus far in this research program is included in the following publications:

1. Influential Factors Concerning Human Resources in Mississippi, by James E. Wall. Preliminary Report 11, Education Series 1.
2. Research in Home Economics Gainful Employment: Five Pilot Projects in Mississippi -- 1965-66, by Mildred R. Witt and James E. Wall. Preliminary Report 15, Education Series 2.
3. Employment Opportunities and Competency Needs in Nonfarm Agricultural Occupations in Mississippi, by James E. Wall, Obed L. Snowden and A. G. Shepherd, Jr. Preliminary Report 16, Education Series 3.
4. Educational Aspirations, Expectations, and Abilities of Rural Male High School Seniors in Mississippi, by James F. Shill. Report 24, Education Series 4.

The information contained in this report is presented to gain insights and understanding of the major forces behind students' educational aspirations, expectations, and abilities. Although this report focuses primarily upon the differences between students with vocational agriculture training and those without such training, the reader may use the information presented with certain limitations for curriculum revision, or for guidance of many male students.

Numerous individuals' consultations, experiences, skills and insights were utilized by the researcher during the conduct of this research. Very special acknowledgements are due to Dr. James E. Wall, Director RCU, Mississippi State University (MSU); Dr. Clifford L. Mondart, Sr., Director of the School of Vocational Education, Louisiana State University (LSU); Dr. J. C. Atherton, Professor of Agricultural Education, LSU; Dr. C. M. Curtis, Professor of Agricultural Education, LSU; Dr. J. H. Hutchinson, Associate Professor of Agricultural Education, LSU; and Dr. Sam Adams, Professor of Education (Statistician), LSU. Acknowledgement is also expressed to Mrs. Sylvia Chapman for typing the report and Mrs. Nannie Carol Booth for coding and clerical assistance.

J. F. S.

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# I. INTRODUCTION

In Mississippi each year thousands of male seniors must make the decision whether to continue their formal education beyond high school, or to enter the world of work, or to go into military service. These decisions will play a major role in the direction they will follow through life. Because of their varied values, backgrounds, abilities, desires and preparations, many of these individuals will desire to continue their formal education beyond high school while others will lack the desire and/or means for additional formal education.

The educational decision affects the individual, the community, the state and the nation. When an individual makes a wise educational decision, both he and society benefit; whereas, when an individual makes an unwise educational decision, both he and society lose. Today, education is the major key to an individual's occupational expectations. Progress in a community, state, or nation is dependent to a great extent upon the educational level of its population. Mills maintains that "the meaning of education has shifted from status and political spheres to economic and occupational areas. In the white-collar life and its patterns of success, the educational segment of the individual's career becomes a key to his entire occupational fate."[1] Today, and even more so in the foreseeable future, the economic stability of an individual tends to be closely tied to his educational decision.[2]

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1. C. W. Mills, White Collar (New York: Oxford, 1953), p. 226.

2. A. O. Haller, L. G. Burchinal, and M. J. Taues, Rural Youth Need Help in Choosing Occupations (East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Bulletin No. 235, 1963), p. 8.

Because of the importance of such decisions in the lives of Mississippi youth, it was deemed desirable to conduct a research study to determine possible correlates which could be compared with previous research.

Previous research (see Selected References at the end of this report) in other states gives strong indications that differences do exist between educational aspirations, expectations, and abilities of rural youth. The enumeration of factors which are significantly associated with the educational aspirations, expectations and abilities of rural youth could be extremely valuable to persons who counsel students in Mississippi about their educational decisions.

## The Problem and Objectives

This research was concerned with determining and analyzing the differences among educational aspirations, expectations and abilities of rural male seniors based upon their participation or non-participation in high school vocational agriculture programs. Also, an attempt was made to develop a framework for identifying some of the personal, economic, educational, and social factors that apparently influence the students' educational aspirations, expectations, and abilities.

It was the central purpose of this research to provide vocational educators in general, and agricultural educators in particular, with insights into the educational aspirations, expectations and abilities of rural male seniors. The study also focused upon related factors which might play important roles in the educational aspirations, expectations and abilities of seniors. With findings of this study it is hoped that a more realistic approach may be made to counseling individuals relative to their educational decisions.

Specific objectives of the research were: (1) to compare the educational aspirations, expectations, and abilities of seniors who had one or more years of vo-ag instruction to those who had no such instructions; and (2) to study factors relating to the educational aspiration/expectation differentials among and between vo-ag and non-vo-ag seniors.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Theoretical Frame of Reference

For this research a senior was conceptualized as a decision-maker who had given sufficient thought to his educational decision and whose decision on educational objective was more or less concrete. It was assumed that educational aspirations, expectations, and abilities of seniors were influenced by their values, their peers, their school, and their families.

In addition, self-conceptualization by the seniors of their educational abilities was felt to strongly influence their educational aspirations and expectations as indicated by Slocum.[3] Some relevance is also given the concept by Cantril,[4] who points out that objects, people, symbols, events, and ideas come together to form an individual's world of reality, which includes fears, hopes, faith and aspirations.

### Research Design and Method

Data were gathered principally from classroom questionnaires administered by vo-ag instructors and/or counselors (selected for their rapport with the respondents) during April and May of 1967. All rural male seniors who were present during the class period selected for administration of the questionnaire were asked to participate in the study. Most agreed to do so, but some did not complete the questionnaires and

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3. W. L. Slocum, "The Influence of Reference Group Values on Educational Aspirations of Rural High School Students," Rural Sociology Vol. 32 (September, 1967), p. 271.

4. Hadley Cantril, "Perception and Interpersonal Relations," Current Perspectives in Social Psychology (New York: Oxford, 1967), p. 285.

for this reason were omitted from the study. A total of 517 seniors were included. Of this number 400 had one or more years of vo-ag instruction and 117 had received no vo-ag instruction.

Of the 266 high schools with vo-ag programs during the 1966-67 session in Mississippi, 33 (12.4 percent) were selected in a restricted random sample for the research. The 33 high schools represented 31 of 82 counties within the state. Most areas in the state were adequately represented.

## Analytical Design and Method

Two groups formed the basis for analysis in this research. The first group was composed of 117 nonvo-ag seniors, and the second group was composed of 400 vo-ag seniors.

The analysis was conducted in four phases. The first phase consisted of analyzing the educational aspirations and expectations of the seniors; the second, of finding the direction of difference between the educational aspirations and expectations; the third, of analyzing the educational abilities; and the fourth, of determining factors related to the educational aspiration/expectation differentials among and between vo-ag and nonvo-ag seniors.

This report presents information in the form of percentage distributions, upon which tests of significance were made. Indicated levels of significance were obtained by employing the chi-square ($X^2$) statistical technique. The chi-square test was considered significant at the .05 level in this report.

## III. FINDINGS

### A. Educational Aspirations and Expectations

Earlier research[5] by rural sociologists has found that students who came from farm backgrounds had lower educational aspirations and expectations than did nonfarm students. However, a recent study by Slocum[6] failed to fonfirm the findings of the earlier research. In his study more farm than nonfarm males aspired and expected to obtain college educations.

When the relationship between educational aspirations and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested in this research, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed. It was expected that more students without vo-ag training would aspire to obtain college degrees than students with such training. However, the gap between the groups was not expected to be so large. It was found that over four-fifths of the nonvo-ag group aspired to bachelors' or higher degrees as shown in Table 1, whereas only about one-half of the vo-ag group indicated like aspirations. Over three times as many students in the vo-ag group as in

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5. L. G. Burchinal, "Differences in Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Farm, Small-Town, and City Boys," Rural Sociology, 26 (June, 1961), pp. 107-121; J. D. Cowhig and C. B. Nam, "Educational Status, College Plans, and Occupational Status of Farm and Nonfarm Youths: October 1959," Current Population Reports: Farm Population, Series Census-ERS, No. 30, Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Census, (August, 1961), p. 27; A. O. Haller and W. H. Sewell, "Farm Residence and Levels of Educational and Occupational Aspirations," American Journal of Sociology, 62 (January, 1957), pp. 407-411; Russel Middleton and C. M. Grigg, "Rural-Urban Differences in Aspirations," Rural Sociology, 24 (December, 1959), pp. 347-354; W. L. Slocum, Occupational and Educational Plans of High School Seniors from Farm and Non-Farm Homes, (Pullman, Washington Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 564), February, 1956.

6. W. L. Slocum, "The Influence of Reference Group Values on Educational Aspirations of Rural High School Students," op. cit.

Table 1. Comparisons of Seniors, by Educational Aspiration and Expectation Levels, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Educational Classification | Aspiration Level | | | Expectation Level | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Non Vo-Ag[1] | Vo-Ag[1] | Total | Non Vo-Ag[2] | Vo-Ag[2] | Total |
| | ----- Percentage of N ----- | | | ----- Percentage of N ----- | | |
| College (Ph.D.) | 34 | 19 | 22 | 7 | 2 | 3 |
| College (M.S.) | 29 | 9 | 14 | 26 | 6 | 11 |
| College (B.S.) | 24 | 23 | 23 | 39 | 24 | 28 |
| College* (3 years or less) | 9 | 20 | 18 | 14 | 21 | 19 |
| Vocational School | 2 | 11 | 9 | 3 | 15 | 12 |
| Business School | - | 5 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 4 |
| No formal education beyond High School | 2 | 13 | 10 | 9 | 27 | 23 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

* (In Mississippi most post-secondary vocational programs are located in junior colleges. An extremely high percentage of seniors in this category will enroll in vocational-technical programs.)

[1] Chi-square value = 539.82 - Significant at .01 level.

[2] Chi-square value = 447.64 - Significant at .01 level.

the nonvo-ag group aspired to three-years-or-less formal training beyond high school. One of the alarming facets of the study was that over six times as many vo-ag students as nonvo-ag students reported no aspiration toward continuing some type of formal education beyond high school.

Why does such a difference in educational aspirations of the two groups exist? Perhaps the most over-worked theory for the difference is based upon measured abilities (I.Q., reading, etc.) as indicated by Waters.[7] However, the researcher is more inclined to believe the answers are to be found in the home environment, peer group influence, and school atmosphere as stressed by Berdie,[8] Drabick,[9] Wilson and Buck,[10] Burchinal and Associates,[11]

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7. E. W. Waters, "Vocational Aspirations, Intelligence Problems and Socio-Economic Status of Rural Negro High School Seniors on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Their Implications for Vocational Guidance," Occupational Status Orientations of Rural Youth (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University, Report No. 66-3, September, 1966), p. 51.

8. R. F. Berdie, "Why Don't They Go to College?", Personnel and Guidance Journal, 31 (1953), pp. 352-56.

9. L. W. Drabick, Relationships Among Selected Motivations Into Vocational Education (Raleigh, North Carolina: Department of Agricultural Education and Rural Sociology, North Carolina State University, No. 6, 1965.

10. P. B. Wilson and R. C. Buck, "The Educational Ladder," Rural Sociology, 25 (December, 1960), pp. 404-13.

11. L. G. Burchinal, D. R. Kaldor, E. Eldridge, and I. W. Arthur, "What Influences Farm Boys' Career Choices?", Research Summary: Factors Relating to Occupational and Educational Decision Making of Rural Youth (Lincoln, Nebraska: North Central Region Agricultural Experiment Station Committee and the Nebraska Occupational Education Research and Coordination Unit, Department of Agricultural Education, University of Nebraska, April, 1967), p. 12.

Schultz,[12] and Siemens.[13]

In view of the results obtained on the aspirations of the seniors, the researcher expected the same trend for the educational expectations of the seniors. Previous research conducted by Haller[14] indicated that students from rural backgrounds have lower educational expectations than students from urban backgrounds. Another study by Drabick[15] indicated that vo-ag students have lower educational expectations than nonvo-ag students. However, they are more firmly committed to their objectives.

Upon examination of the relationship between educational expectations and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed. Nearly three-fourths of the nonvo-ag group expected bachelors' or higher degrees, as compared to approximately one-third of the vo-ag group. It was found that 41 percent of the vo-ag group and 19 percent of the nonvo-ag group expected some formal training (less than a bachelor's degree) beyond high school. However, three times as many vo-ag seniors (27 percent) as nonvo-ag seniors (9 percent) expected no formal training beyond high school.

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12. T. W. Schultz, "Underinvestment in the Quality of Schooling: The Rural Farm Acres," ibid., p. 23.

13. L. B. Siemens, "The Influence of Selected Family Factors on the Educational and Occupational Aspiration Levels of High School Boys and Girls," Occupational Status Orientations of Rural Youth (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University, Report No. 66-3, September, 1966), p. 63.

14. A. O. Haller, "The Occupational Achievement Process of Farm-Reared Youth in Urban-Industrial Society," Rural Sociology, 25 (September, 1960), pp. 321-33.

15. L. W. Drabick, "The Vocational Agriculture Student and His Peers," Occupational Status, Orientations of Rural Youth (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University, Report No. 66-3, September, 1966), p. 41.

In the light of these findings, 27 percent of the vo-ag group and 9 percent of the nonvo-ag group were unaware of the benefits of continuing some type of formal education beyond high school and/or felt they did not have the means or abilities to do so.

## B. Direction of Difference Between Educational Aspirations and Expectations

Respondents reported the level of education they aspired to, as well as the level of education they expected to complete. To obtain a standard of reference, each individual's difference between level of education and aspiration was coded into one of three ranges as shown in Table II. Each of the responses was further classified by the seniors' participation in vo-ag instruction.

Table II. Comparison of Seniors, by Direction of Difference Between Educational Aspirations and Expectations, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Direction of Difference | Nonvo-Ag[1] | Vo-Ag[1] | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ---------- Percentage of N ---------- | | |
| Aspired Higher | 47 | 40 | 41 |
| No Difference | 48 | 54 | 53 |
| Expected Higher | 5 | 6 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 7.44 - Significant at the .05 level.

When the relationship between direction of difference in educational aspirations and expectations, and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested in this research a significant difference ($P < .05$) was observed. It was found that more seniors in the nonvo-ag group than in the vo-ag group aspired to higher levels of education than they expected to obtain. It was interesting to note that many of the seniors in the nonvo-ag group indicated aspirations that were several levels above their expectations. Vo-ag seniors in the same category generally had aspirations only one level higher than their expectations. These findings indicated that the vo-ag seniors tended to be somewhat more realistic in their aspirations than nonvo-ag seniors in the same category.

Many respondents in both groups indicated no difference between their educational aspirations and expectations. However, more of the vo-ag group (54 percent) than the nonvo-ag group (48 percent) felt that there would be no difference between their aspirations and expectations.

An interesting finding was that approximately equal percentages of both groups expected to obtain higher levels of education than they aspired to. Upon closer examination of these respondents it was found that all of them listed their parents as having the most influence upon their educational objectives. Evidently these parents were encouraging their sons to obtain higher levels of education than the sons actually desired.

In view of these results it was concluded that 52 percent of the nonvo-ag group and 46 percent of the vo-ag group needed assistance in narrowing the gap between their aspiration/expectation differentials.

## C. Educational Abilities

This section of the report presents a brief glimpse into the educational abilities of the individuals included in the study. The exploration of respondents' educational abilities focuses upon two major

phases: (1) overall educational abilities, and (2) seniors' conceptualizations of their specific educational abilities.

## Overall Educational Abilities

Overall Grade Average. Why were nonvo-ag seniors' educational aspirations and expectations higher than those of vo-ag seniors? Perhaps scholastic achievement, grades and ratings do indeed exert a dominant influence over the educational level and in turn the occupational level of students as suggested by Burchinal and Associates.[16] Or perhaps the answer is to be found in negative background factors (family, peer or other influences) which drastically affect scholastic achievement.

Table III. Comparison of Seniors, by Overall Grade Average, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Grade Average | Nonvo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N = 400 | Total N = 517 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ---------- Percentage of N ---------- | | |
| "A" | 8 | 4 | 4 |
| "B" | 44 | 23 | 28 |
| "C" | 45 | 63 | 59 |
| "D" | 3 | 10 | 9 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 146.86 - Significant at the .01 level.

In regard to actual grade averages, it was noted in Table III that approximately twice as many seniors in the nonvo-ag group as

16. L. G. Burchinal, D. R. Kaldor, E. Eldridge and I. W. Arthur, "What Influences Farm Boys' Career Choices?", op. cit.

in the vo-ag group possessed "A" or "B" overall averages, while 63 percent of the vo-ag group and 45 percent of the nonvo-ag group were found to have "C" averages. Slightly over three times as many vo-ag seniors as nonvo-ag seniors were found to exhibit "D" overall averages. When the relationship between overall grade average and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed. These findings were not totally unexpected in view of other data brought forth in this study.

Rank in Class. The educational achievement of the seniors as indicated by their rank in class logically should exert some degree of influence upon their educational aspirations and expectations. This viewpoint is given added substance by Wilson and Buck,[17] who concluded that educational achievement has a definite effect upon an individual's educational choices.

Notable results in Table IV indicate that nearly twice as many seniors in the nonvo-ag group as in the vo-ag group ranked in the upper 10 percent of their respective classes. These findings were comparable to those involving overall grade average, in which 60 percent of the nonvo-ag group and 36 percent of the vo-ag group ranked in the upper one-third of their classes. Over four times as many seniors in the vo-ag group as in the nonvo-ag group were in the lower one-third of their classes. An examination of the relationship between rank in class and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs revealed a highly significant difference ($P < .01$).

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17. P. B. Wilson and R. C. Buck, "The Educational Ladder," op. cit.

Table IV. Comparison of Seniors, by Rank in Class, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Rank in Class | Nonvo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N = 400 | Total N = 517 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ---------- Percentage of N ---------- | | |
| Upper one-tenth* | 27 | 14 | 17 |
| Upper one-third | 60 | 36 | 42 |
| Middle one-third | 37 | 51 | 48 |
| Lower one-third | 3 | 13 | 10 |

* Sub-division of upper one-third.
1 Chi-square value = 195.96 - Significant at the .01 level.

Highly significant differences ($P < .01$) existed between the nonvo-ag and the vo-ag groups in both the measures used to test overall educational abilities. Generally, seniors in the nonvo-ag group possessed higher overall averages and ranked higher in their classes than seniors in the vo-ag group.

Conceptualization of Specific Educational Abilities

Respondents in both groups were asked to respond to eight specific educational abilities included in an educational abilities index. In the index each respondent rated his specific educational abilities as being: (1) excellent, (2) good, (3) fair or (4) poor. The responses are shown in Table V.

Reading Ability. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when the relationship between reading ability and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested. In the nonvo-ag group, 79 percent considered their reading ability excellent or good, and 21 percent considered it fair. In contrast, 61 percent of the vo-ag group considered their reading ability excellent or good, and

Table V. Comparisons of Seniors, by Selected Educational Abilities, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| | Rating of Abilities | | | | Chi-Square Value | Level of Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor | | |
| | ----- Percentage of N ------ | | | | | |
| **Reading** | | | | | | |
| NonVo-Ag (N=117) | 29 | 50 | 21 | - | 70.0 | .01 |
| Vo-Ag (N=400) | 16 | 45 | 36 | 3 | | |
| Total (N=517) | 19 | 46 | 32 | 3 | | |
| **Writing** | | | | | | |
| NonVo-Ag (N=117) | 21 | 49 | 25 | 5 | 101.21 | .01 |
| Vo-Ag (N=400) | 6 | 44 | 44 | 6 | | |
| Total (N=517) | 9 | 46 | 39 | 6 | | |
| **Speaking** | | | | | | |
| NonVo-Ag (N=117) | 21 | 54 | 22 | 3 | 157.60 | .01 |
| Vo-Ag (N=400) | 8 | 40 | 46 | 6 | | |
| Total (N=517) | 11 | 44 | 40 | 5 | | |
| **Mathematical** | | | | | | |
| NonVo-Ag (N=117) | 17 | 32 | 38 | 13 | 29.70 | .01 |
| Vo-Ag (N=400) | 8 | 31 | 46 | 15 | | |
| Total (N=517) | 10 | 31 | 44 | 15 | | |
| **Scientific** | | | | | | |
| NonVo-Ag (N=117) | 11 | 57 | 29 | 3 | 284.68 | .01 |
| Vo-Ag (N=400) | 3 | 32 | 53 | 12 | | |
| Total (N=517) | 4 | 37 | 48 | 11 | | |
| **Business** | | | | | | |
| NonVo-Ag (N=117) | 11 | 48 | 38 | 3 | 121.90 | .01 |
| Vo-Ag (N=400) | 3 | 37 | 49 | 11 | | |
| Total (N=517) | 5 | 39 | 47 | 9 | | |
| **Agricultural** | | | | | | |
| NonVo-Ag (N=117) | 2 | 24 | 37 | 37 | 750.86 | .01 |
| Vo-Ag (N=400) | 18 | 53 | 26 | 3 | | |
| Total (N=517) | 14 | 47 | 28 | 11 | | |
| **Trade and Industrial** | | | | | | |
| NonVo-Ag (N=117) | 8 | 26 | 55 | 11 | 41.11 | .01 |
| Vo-Ag (N=400) | 7 | 40 | 47 | 6 | | |
| Total (N=517) | 7 | 37 | 49 | 7 | | |

39 percent considered it fair or poor.

Writing Ability. When the relationship between writing ability and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was detected. It was found that 50 percent of the vo-ag group and 70 percent of the nonvo-ag group rated their writing ability excellent or good, whereas, 30 percent of the nonvo-ag group and 50 percent of the vo-ag group considered their writing ability fair or poor.

Speaking Ability. In the nonvo-ag group, 75 percent considered their speaking ability excellent or good, and 25 percent considered their speaking ability fair or poor. In contrast, 48 percent of the vo-ag group conceptualized their speaking ability as excellent or good, and 52 percent as fair or poor. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when the relationship between speaking ability and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested.

Mathematical Ability. A highly significant relationship ($P < .01$) between mathematical ability and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was found to exist. Approximately one-half of the nonvo-ag group considered their mathematical ability excellent or good, and approximately one-half fair or poor; whereas, 39 percent of the vo-ag group considered their mathematical ability excellent or good, and 61 percent as fair or poor.

Scientific Ability. When the relationship between scientific ability and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed. Approximately two-thirds of the nonvo-ag group considered their scientific ability

excellent or good, and approximately one-third considered their ability fair or poor. The reverse was found in the vo-ag group in which approximately one-third considered their scientific ability excellent or good, and approximately two-thirds considered theirs as fair or poor.

Business Ability. Nearly three-fifths of the nonvo-ag group conceptualized their business ability as being excellent or good, and approximately two-fifths as being fair or poor. Again the reverse was found in the vo-ag group, in which two-fifths conceptualized their business ability as excellent or good, and three-fifths as fair or poor. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when the relationship between business ability and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested.

Agricultural Ability. Approximately one-fourth of the nonvo-ag group considered their agricultural ability excellent or good, and nearly three-fourths as fair or poor; whereas, 71 percent of the vo-ag group considered their agricultural ability excellent or good, and 29 percent as fair or poor. When the relationship between agricultural ability and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested, as expected, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed.

Trade and Industrial Ability. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when the relationship between trade and industrial ability, and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested. In the nonvo-ag group, approximately one-third of the seniors considered their trade and industrial ability excellent or good, while two-thirds viewed theirs as being fair of poor. In contrast, 47 percent of the vo-ag group considered their trade and industrial ability to be

excellent or good, and 53 percent considered it to be fair or poor.

Highly significant differences ($P < .01$) were indicated between the nonvo-ag and the vo-ag groups in all eight educational abilities tested. Generally, nonvo-ag seniors conceptualized their six academic abilities as being higher and their two vocational abilities as being lower than the vo-ag seniors.

## D. Profile of the Sample

This section of the report deals with specific variables which influenced directly or indirectly the respondents' motivations, abilities, interests, aspirations, and expectations. In order to gain a clear concept of possible causes of educational aspirations/expectations differentials, four areas were scrutinized. These areas involved: (1) sociological variables; (2) economic variables; (3) educational variables; and (4) psychological variables.

### Age of Respondents

As indicated by data in Table VI, respondents were stratified by age categories. Undoubtedly, age played a prominent role in the concreteness of the seniors' educational decisions, their educational aspirations, and their expectations.

Notably, most seniors (over 80 percent) regardless of their participation in vo-ag instruction were 17 or 18 years of age. However, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was detected when age of seniors was related to their participation in vo-ag programs. Approximately two-and-a-half times as many seniors in the vo-ag group as in the nonvo-ag group were 19 or more years of age. This fact may well be an indication that some seniors who participated in vo-ag

Table VI. Comparison of Seniors, by Age, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Age | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N = 400 | Total N = 517 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ---------- Percentage of N ---------- | | |
| 16 or Less | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| 17 | 47 | 40 | 41 |
| 18 | 42 | 41 | 41 |
| 19 or More | 6 | 16 | 14 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 86.6 - Significant at the .01 level.

instruction have had academic trouble or grade failures at some time or other during their school careers. Likewise, this also may attest to the school retention power of vo-ag programs for students with academic troubles who were potential dropouts.

Respondents' Place of Residence

Information has been advanced that place of residence exerts a tremendous amount of influence upon the educational aspirations and expectations of youth. This information has been given additional substance in previous research,[18] which indicated that aspirations of farm residents were lowest, open-country residents highest, and village residents, intermediate.

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18. J. D. Cowhig, J. Artis, J. A. Beegle and H. Goldsmith, Orientation Toward Occupation and Residence: A Study of High School Seniors in Four Rural Counties of Michigan (East Lansing: Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, Special Bulletin 428, 1960).

When respondents' place of residence was related to their participation in vo-ag programs, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed between the vo-ag and nonvo-ag group. As depicted in Table VII, over one-half of the vo-ag group resided on farms, whereas over one-half of the nonvo-ag group resided in either small or large towns. Similar percentages of both groups resided in the open-country.

In view of the findings of this study and those of previous research, the place of residence may be one important indicator of why more vo-ag seniors have lower educational aspirations and expectations than nonvo-ag seniors.

Table VII. Comparison of Seniors, by Place of Residence, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Place of Residence | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N = 400 | Total N = 517 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Percentage of N | | |
| Farm | 22 | 56 | 48 |
| Open-Country | 23 | 26 | 26 |
| Small Town | 33 | 13 | 17 |
| Large Town | 22 | 5 | 9 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 305.38 - Significant at the .01 level.

Income of Fathers

Information advanced by a previous study[19] indicates that the differences in socio-economic status of rural youths' families are

19. E. G. Youmans, "Factors in Educational Attainment," Rural Sociology, Vol. 24, (March, 1959), pp. 21-28.

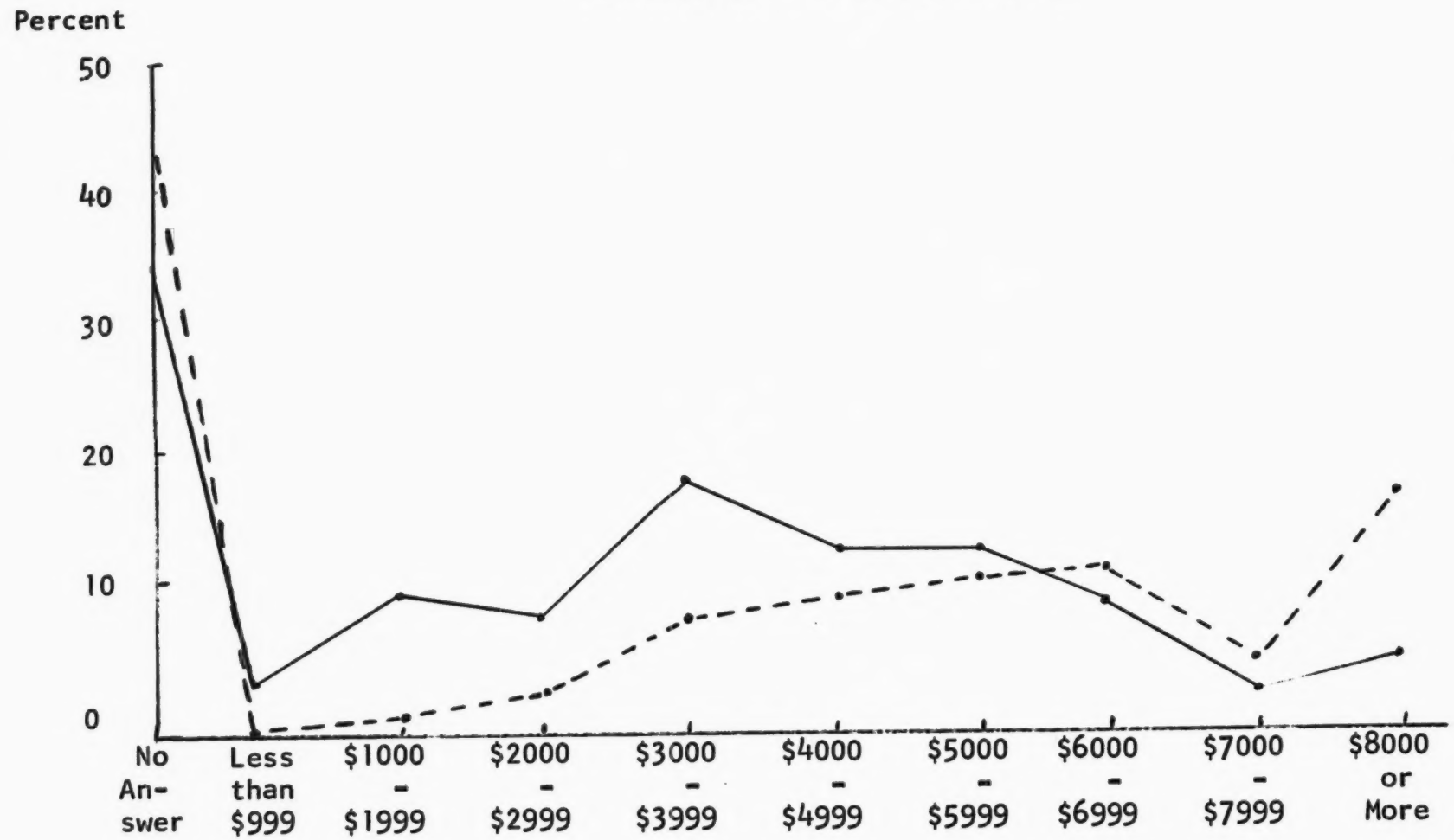
associated with the differences in their educational attainments. As one indicator of family socio-economic status, each respondent was requested to indicate his father's income in one of nine income ranges. For ease of interpretation three groups were designed: (1) Lower income (less than $2,999), (2) Middle income ($3,000 - $5,999), and (3) Higher income (more than $6,000).

Figure 1 shows that more seniors in the vo-ag group than the nonvo-ag group reported fathers with low or middle incomes, whereas, in the nonvo-ag group more seniors had fathers in the higher income category. The higher percentage of seniors in the vo-ag group reported fathers with incomes in the $3,000 to $3,999 range. In contrast, the highest percentage of seniors in the nonvo-ag group reported fathers with incomes above $8,000. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was related to incomes of father.

In light of these findings and the findings that, generally, vo-ag seniors had lower educational aspirations and expectations than did nonvo-ag seniors, it seems tenable to assume that economic factors do greatly influence these differences. However, when the place of seniors' residence was considered, it complicated the picture to some degree. With over one-half of the vo-ag group living on farms, it seemed fairly safe to rationalize that farm dwellers might have had varying degrees of income other than of a cash nature (such as meat, milk, vegetables, eggs, etc.) which increased the family level of living. While economic status of the family undoubtedly influences the youth's educational aspiration/expectation differentials, there is implicit danger of over-emphasizing its importance.

Figure 1

Relationship of Income of Fathers to Seniors' Participation in Vo-Ag Programs




——— Vo-Ag Seniors

- - - - Nonvo-Ag Seniors

Chi-square value = 365.18 - Significant at the .01 level.

Number of Siblings

Undoubtedly, the number of siblings in seniors' homes had varying degrees of influence upon their educational aspirations and expectations. A large number of children tended to characterize a family with lower socio-economic status, while fewer children were more typical of a family of higher socio-economic status. Usually the higher the socio-economic level of the family generally, the more educational encouragement and opportunities were afforded the children, thus, influencing them to have higher levels of educational aspirations and expectations.

As expected, in view of the findings of the vo-ag seniors' places of residence and incomes of fathers, it was found that seniors in the vo-ag group tended to come from larger families. It is interesting to note in Table VIII that 56 percent of the seniors in the vo-ag group had three or more siblings in the home, as compared to only 37 percent of seniors in the nonvo-ag group. When number of siblings were related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed.

Parental Educational Level

What role does the educational level of parents play in the educational aspirations, expectations and abilities of their children? Information has been advanced that parents who have low educational levels tend to give less encouragement and less financial support to their offspring than parents who have higher levels of education. If this rationale is adhered to, children of parents with low educational levels should find it more difficult to attain higher levels of education than children of parents with higher levels of education.

Table VIII. Comparison of Seniors, by Number of Siblings, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Number of Siblings | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N = 400 | Total N = 517 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ---------- Percentage of N ---------- | | |
| None | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| One or two | 57 | 37 | 42 |
| Three of four | 27 | 29 | 28 |
| Five or six | 8 | 15 | 13 |
| Seven or eight | 1 | 5 | 5 |
| Nine or more | 1 | 7 | 5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 294.06 - Significant at the .01 level.

This negative influence most likely will affect the childrens' educational expectations and abilities.

Educational Level of Fathers. When the relationship between educational level of fathers and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed. Table IX shows that 42 percent of fathers of nonvo-ag sons had participated in some type of formal education beyond high school. In contrast, only 11 percent of fathers of vo-ag sons had participated in post-high school formal education. Almost three times more fathers of nonvo-ag seniors than fathers of vo-ag seniors participated in formal sub-baccalaureate education upon completion of high school and eight times as many received bachelor's or master's degrees. Sixty-one percent of fathers of vo-ag seniors and 28 percent of fathers of nonvo-ag seniors had not completed high school. Perhaps the fathers of nonvo-ag seniors placed more emphasis upon the value of formal education than did fathers of vo-ag seniors.

Educational Level of Mothers. Table IX depicts the difference in the educational level of mothers of both vo-ag and nonvo-ag seniors. It was found that 28 percent of the mothers of nonvo-ag seniors and 12 percent of mothers of vo-ag seniors had some type of formal education beyond high school. Only eight percent of the nonvo-ag seniors and five percent of the vo-ag seniors reported mothers who had obtained a bachelor's or master's degree. Fifty-two percent of mothers of vo-ag seniors and 28 percent of mothers of nonvo-ag seniors had not completed high school. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when educational level of mothers was related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs. These figures seem to indicate, that, as was the case with fathers, mothers of nonvo-ag seniors perhaps placed more emphasis upon the values of formal education than did mothers of vo-ag seniors.

These findings, plus findings in an earlier study[20] seem to indicate that the educational level of parents strongly influences youths' educational aspirations and expectations. The findings suggest that parental level of education might have been strong enough to act as an influence which resulted in vo-ag seniors having lower educational aspirations, expectations, and abilities than nonvo-ag seniors.

Desired Educational Attainment in Relation to Parental Educational Attainment

At the outset of this study it seemed reasonable to assume that because of the tremendous emphasis given today to formal education, availability of advanced education, and higher educational levels

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20. L. B. Siemens, op. cit.

Table IX. Comparison of Seniors, by Parental Educational Level, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Educational Level | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N=400 | Total N=517 | NonVo-Ag[2] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[2] N=400 | Total N=517 |
| | ---- Percentage of N --- | | | ---- Percentage of N --- | | |
| College (Ph.D.) | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| College (M.S.) | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| College (B.S.) | 12 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 6 |
| College (3 yrs. or less) | 22 | 6 | 10 | 12 | 4 | 6 |
| Vocational or business school | 4 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 4 |
| Completed high school | 25 | 24 | 24 | 41 | 30 | 33 |
| 9 to 11 grades | 13 | 22 | 20 | 20 | 33 | 30 |
| 8 grades or less | 15 | 38 | 32 | 8 | 21 | 18 |
| Did not attend school | - | 1 | 1 | - | - | - |
| No answer | 5 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 248.52 - Significant at the .01 level.
[2] Chi-square value = 167.64 - Significant at the .01 level.

required to enter many occupations, most seniors would aspire to higher levels of formal education than their parents had attained. This assumption was generally proven valid by responses depicted in Table X.

Relation to Fathers' Educational Attainment. Notably, both nonvo-ag and vo-ag seniors desired more formal education than their fathers had obtained. Still, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when seniors' desired educational level in relation to their fathers' was related to their participation in vo-ag programs. Ninety-five percent of the vo-ag group and 90 percent of the nonvo-ag group desired to obtain more education than their fathers. Equal percentages (one percent)

Table X. Comparison of Seniors, by Desired Educational Attainment in Relation to Parental Educational Attainment, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Relationship to Educational Attainment | Relation to Father's | | | Relation to Mother's | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N=400 | Total N=517 | NonVo-Ag[2] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[2] N=400 | Total N=517 |
| | --- Percentage of N --- | | | --- Percentage of N --- | | |
| More than | 90 | 95 | 94 | 97 | 93 | 94 |
| Same as | 9 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| Less than | 1 | 1 | 1 | - | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 13.01 - Significant at .01 level.
[2] Chi square value = 16.99 - Significant at .01 level.

of both groups actually indicated that they desired to obtain less education than their fathers had. Nine percent of the nonvo-ag group and four percent of the vo-ag group desired to obtain the same level of education as their fathers. That the vo-ag group led in desire to obtain more education than their fathers may well be the result of their fathers generally having lower educational levels than fathers of nonvo-ag seniors.

Relation to Mothers' Educational Attainment. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when seniors' desired educational attainment in relation to their mothers' attainment was related to participation in vo-ag programs. Ninety-seven percent of the non-vo-ag group and 94 percent of the vo-ag group desired more education than their mothers had obtained. Six percent of the vo-ag group and three precent of the nonvo-ag group desired the same amount of education as their mothers.

Undoubtedly many situational variables, such as knowledge of the world of work, desire for higher standards of living, dissatisfaction with fathers' occupations, etc., tend to influence seniors' desire to obtain more education than their parents. It should be noted that many seniors in both groups have already obtained higher levels of formal education than their parents.

## Attitude of Parents Toward Seniors Continuing Education Beyond High School

In view of the findings on the educational aspiration/expectation differentials between the nonvo-ag and vo-ag groups it seemed desirable to explore the attitudes of parents toward seniors continuing their education beyond high school. Another study[21] indicated that the more discontented parents were with their educational lots, the more encouragement and motivation they gave their children to get ahead with an education. In light of findings in that study,[22] one might assume that parents with low levels of formal education would give much encouragement to their children. However, close examination of data in this Mississippi study indicated that parents with low levels of education (usually eight grades or less) seemed to be the ones generally who were most contented with their educational levels. It should be recalled, however, that the parental attitudes toward education as expressed here were actually the parental attitudes so preceived by the seniors.

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21. Joseph A. Kahl, "Educational and Occupational Aspirations of 'Common Man' Boys," Harvard Educational Review, Vol. 23 (Summer, 1953), pp. 186-203.

22. Joseph A. Kahl, ibid.

Attitude of Fathers. Table XI shows attitudes of fathers toward seniors continuing their education beyond high school. Ninety-seven percent of the nonvo-ag group and 86 percent of the vo-ag group perceived positive attitudes of their fathers with regard to continuing their education beyond high school. Thirteen percent of the vo-ag group and only three percent of the nonvo-ag group reported fathers who had indifferent or negative attitudes toward continued education. Thus, there was a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) between groups when attitude of fathers was related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs.

Table XI. Comparison of Seniors, by Attitude of Parents Toward Continuing Education Beyond High School, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attitude | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N=400 | Total N=517 | NonVo-Ag[2] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[2] N=400 | Total N=517 |
| | ---- Percentage of N ----- | | | ---- Percentage of N ----- | | |
| Positive | 97 | 86 | 88 | 98 | 91 | 92 |
| Indifferent | 1 | 10 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 6 |
| Negative | - | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 70.32 - Significant at the .01 level.
[2] Chi-square value = 150.0 - Significant at the .01 level.

Attitude of Mothers. Also shown in Table XI is the fact that mothers of seniors in both groups had a more positive attitude toward their sons' continued education than did the fathers. While most mothers in both groups encouraged their sons to continue their education, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when

mothers' attitude toward continuing education was related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs. Ninety-eight percent of the nonvo-ag group and 91 percent of the vo-ag group reported mothers with positive attitudes toward their continued education. Nine percent of the vo-ag group and only two percent of the nonvo-ag group reported mothers with indifferent or negative attitudes.

While more seniors in the vo-ag group than the nonvo-ag group received less encouragement from both parents to continue their education beyond high school, most of the seniors in both groups reported varying degrees of encouragement by both parents.

Parents' Desired Educational Level for Seniors

On the basis of parental-attitudes-toward-education findings above, it was anticipated that both parents of vo-ag seniors would desire lower levels of formal education for their sons than parents of nonvo-ag seniors. This expectation essentially was borne out as shown in Table XII.

Fathers' Desired Educational Level for Seniors. Responses indicated that 98 percent of the fathers of nonvo-ag seniors and 83 percent of the vo-ag seniors' fathers wanted them to obtain some type of formal education beyond high school. Almost twice as many fathers of nonvo-ag seniors as fathers of vo-ag seniors desired their sons to obtain bachelors' or higher degrees. On the other hand, higher percentages of fathers of vo-ag seniors than fathers of nonvo-ag seniors desired them to attend business schools, vocational schools, college for three years or less, or to receive no formal training beyond high school. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was indicated when fathers' desired educational level for sons was related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs.

Table XII. Comparison of Seniors, by Parents Desired Educational Level for Sons, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Desired Educational Level | Fathers | | | Mothers | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N=400 | Total N=517 | NonVo-Ag[2] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[2] N=400 | Total N=517 |
| | ---- Percentage of N ----- | | | ---- Percentage of N ----- | | |
| College (Ph.D.) | 22 | 8 | 11 | 25 | 9 | 13 |
| College (M.S.) | 21 | 6 | 9 | 19 | 7 | 10 |
| College (B.S.) | 39 | 31 | 33 | 41 | 30 | 33 |
| College ( 3 yrs. or less)* | 15 | 28 | 25 | 13 | 32 | 28 |
| Vocational School | - | 7 | 5 | - | 5 | 4 |
| Business School | 1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 |
| Finish High School | 2 | 17 | 14 | 1 | 13 | 9 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

* An extremely high percentage of seniors in this category would enroll in vocational-technical programs in Junior Colleges.
1 Chi-square value = 625.98 - Significant at the .01 level.
2 Chi-square value = 758.46 - Significant at the .01 level.

Mothers' Desired Educational Level for Seniors. The trend for mothers' desired educational levels for sons was observed to be similar to that of fathers. However, generally, mothers were found to desire slightly higher levels of education for their sons than fathers. Eighty-five percent of the nonvo-ag group and 46 percent of the vo-ag group reported mothers who wanted them to obtain bachelors' or higher degrees. As was true of the fathers, more mothers of vo-ag than of nonvo-ag seniors desired their sons to attend business schools, vocational schools, less than three years of college, or not to receive formal training beyond high school. When mothers' desired educational level for sons was related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs, a

highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed.

Persons Having Most Influence Upon Level of Education Desired by Seniors

A previous study[23] indicated that the determining influence upon student quest for formal education beyond high school was the family and home environment. Secondary forces came from peers, teachers, and non-home influences. The implications of the Minnesota study have generally paralleled those in this Mississippi study.

Table XIII shows that 79 percent of the nonvo-ag group and 72 percent of the vo-ag group were influenced most in their desired level of education by a member of their immediate family. Approximately two-thirds of both groups listed mothers or fathers as the persons having the most influence. However, higher percentages of fathers were listed by the nonvo-ag group than the vo-ag group. Seniors in the vo-ag group were evidently influenced more by persons outside the immediate family than were those in the nonvo-ag group. Teachers had over three times as much influence upon the desired educational level of seniors in the vo-ag group as in the nonvo-ag group. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when persons having most influence upon level of education desired by seniors was related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs.

Sources of Financing Education Beyond High School

Respondents were asked to reveal major sources of financing their education beyond high school as shown in Table XIV. As groups,

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23. R. F. Berdie, op. cit.

Table XIII. Comparison of Seniors, by Persons Having Most Influence Upon Level of Education Deisred, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N=400 | Total N=517 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Percentage of N | | |
| Father | 46 | 33 | 36 |
| Mother | 22 | 33 | 30 |
| Brother | 10 | 5 | 6 |
| Sister | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Other relative | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Friend | 3 | 6 | 5 |
| Minister | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Teacher | 4 | 14 | 12 |
| Other persons | 10 | 3 | 6 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 164.64 - Significant at the .01 level.

53 percent of the vo-ag seniors and 39 percent of the nonvo-ag seniors indicated that they would finance most of thier education beyond high school by working either part-time of full-time. This finding may mean that vo-ag seniors perceived themselves as being better able to earn through part-time or full-time employment than did the nonvo-ag seniors. The nonvo-ag group indicated that they probably would rely more on parents and scholarships to finance their education than did the vo-ag group. Similar percentages of both groups said they would either borrow or seek other sources for financing their education. When source of financing education beyond high school was related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed.

Table XIV. Comparison of Seniors, by Source of Financing Education Beyond High School, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Source | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N=400 | Total N=517 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ---------- Percentage of N ---------- | | |
| Parents | 38 | 28 | 30 |
| Scholarships | 13 | 8 | 9 |
| Working part-time | 31 | 42 | 40 |
| Working full-time | 8 | 11 | 10 |
| Borrowing | 7 | 8 | 8 |
| Other | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 37.90 - Significant at the .01 level.

## High School Subjects' Influence Upon Desired Educational Levels of Seniors

It seemed possible during the conduct of this study that some high school subjects would have more influence upon the educational aspirations and expectations of seniors than others. This influence could be exerted in a negative form as well as in a positive form. It seemed desirable to gain some insight into subjects that play negative roles as well as those which play positive roles in educational aspirations and expectations. Three questions on high school subjects were used as indicators of influence upon the desired educational levels.

Subject Liked Most. Table XV shows that the largest portion of the nonvo-ag group listed science and the largest portion of the vo-ag group listed vo-ag as the subject most liked in high school. Ironically, the second and third largest portions of both groups listed mathematics and social studies as the subjects liked most in high school. When subject liked most in high school was related to seniors' participation in

Table XV. Comparison of Seniors, by High School Subjects' Influence Upon Desired Educational Levels, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| | Subject Liked Most | | | Subject Liked Least | | | Subject Having Most Influence | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N=400 | Total N=517 | NonVo-Ag[2] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[2] N=400 | Total N=517 | NonVo-Ag[3] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[3] N=400 | Total N=517 |
| | --- Percentage of N --- | | | --- Percentage of N --- | | | --- Percentage of N --- | | |
| Business | 8 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 11 | 9 | 9 |
| English | 9 | 4 | 5 | 37 | 46 | 44 | 10 | 7 | 8 |
| Mathematics | 21 | 19 | 19 | 20 | 22 | 21 | 22 | 18 | 19 |
| Science | 31 | 9 | 14 | 13 | 11 | 11 | 27 | 9 | 13 |
| Social Studies | 18 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 9 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 11 |
| Trade and Industry | 4 | 8 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 8 |
| Vo-Ag | - | 35 | 27 | 3 | 3 | 3 | - | 31 | 24 |
| Others | 9 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 14 | 7 | 8 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 107.38 - Significant at the .01 level.
[2] Chi-square value = 29.31 - Significant at the .01 level.
[3] Chi-square value = 80.54 - Significant at the .01 level.

vo-ag programs, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed.

Subject Liked Least. Table XV shows that over one-third of the nonvo-ag group and almost one-half of the vo-ag group reported English as the least liked subject in high school. The second largest portions of seniors in both groups (similar percentages) listed mathematics as the least liked subject. However, the third largest portion of the nonvo-ag group listed social studies, and the third largest portion of the vo-ag group listed science as the subject least liked in high school. A highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed when subject least liked in high school was related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs.

Subject Having Most Influence Upon Desired Educational Level. It can be detected from Table XV that in the vo-ag group the three subjects having the most influence on desired educational level were: (1) vo-ag (31 percent), (2) mathematics (18 percent), and (3) social studies (11 percent); whereas, the three leading subjects having the most influence upon the nonvo-ag group were (1) science (27 percent), (2) mathematics (22 percent), and (3) other subjects not listed in the check list (14 percent). When the subject having most influence upon desired educational level was related to seniors' participation in vo-ag programs, a highly significant difference ($P < .01$) was observed.

Grade in Which Aspired Educational Level was Selected

Respondents in both groups were asked to indicate in which grade they had selected their educational aspiration levels. Their responses are shown in Table XVI.

Most of the seniors in both groups (approximately three-fourths) selected their education level in the eleventh or twelfth grades.

However, there was a definite trend for the vo-ag group to make their selection slightly earlier than the nonvo-ag group. A close examination of those seniors who said they made their selections in the ninth or tenth grades revealed that they generally aspired to relatively low education levels. The few exceptions in the groups were those seniors who had extremely high educational aspirations to meet entrance requirements for such specific occupations as college professor or medical doctor. When the relationship between grade in which educational level was selected and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested, a significant difference ($P < .05$) was detected.

Table XVI. Comparison of Seniors, by Grade in Which Aspired Educational Level was Selected, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Grade | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N=400 | Total N=517 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ---------- Percentage of N ---------- | | |
| 9th | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| 10th | 7 | 10 | 9 |
| 11th | 22 | 25 | 24 |
| 12th | 55 | 49 | 51 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 10.28 - Significant at the .05 level.

Probable Reason for Not Attaining Educational Aspiration Level

Each individual was requested to indicate the reason for not continuing his education beyond high school or the probable reason he would not be able to reach his aspiration level if something were to stop him in the future. Responses were categorized in Table XVII.

Table XVII. Comparison of Seniors, by Probable Reason for Not Attaining Educational Aspirations Level, According to Participation in Vo-Ag Instruction.

| Grade | NonVo-Ag[1] N = 117 | Vo-Ag[1] N=400 | Total N=517 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | ---------- Percentage of N ---------- | | |
| Lack of interest | 28 | 30 | 30 |
| Lack of ability | 22 | 26 | 25 |
| Lack of finances | 48 | 43 | 44 |
| Other reasons | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 100 | 100 | 100 |

[1] Chi-square value = 5.77 - Not significant at the .05 level.

It was interesting to note that in both groups the leading reason for not being able to reach their educational goal would probably be lack of finances. Forty-eight percent of the nonvo-ag group and 43 percent of the vo-ag group indicated that finances were now a problem or were fearful that they would become problems before they attained their educational aspiration levels. Slightly more vo-ag seniors than nonvo-ag seniors felt that their ability was or might become a crucial factor in their not obtaining their educational aspiration levels. Approximately equal percentages of both groups considered their own lack of interest as being a limiting factor. When the realtionship between probable reason for not attaining educational aspiration level and seniors' participation in vo-ag programs was tested, NO significant difference ($P > .05$) was detected.

# IV. SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

## A. An Overview

This report presents the findings of a study on the educational aspirations, expectations, and abilities of 517 rural male high school seniors in Mississippi. Of this group of seniors, 400 had participated in one-or-more years of vo-ag instruction, and 117 had not participated in such instruction. Data were collected from seniors in 33 rural high schools throughout the State. Of the 82 counties in the State, 31 were represented by at least one rural high school.

The following generalizations were drawn from findings in this study:

(1) More seniors in the nonvo-ag group than in the vo-ag group aspired to and expected to obtain Bachelors' or higher degrees.

(2) More vo-ag seniors than nonvo-ag seniors aspired to and expected to obtain formal training in business schools, vocational schools or junior colleges.

(3) Three times as many vo-ag seniors as nonvo-ag seniors expected to obtain no formal education beyond high school.

(4) Approximately one-half of the seniors in both groups had educational aspiration/expectation differentials.

(5) More seniors in the nonvo-ag group than in the vo-ag group exhibited high overall grade averages and ranked high in their classes.

(6) More seniors in the vo-ag group than in the nonvo-ag group conceptualized their academic abilities as being low and their vocational abilities as being high.

(7) More seniors in the vo-ag group than in the nonvo-ag group were older, resided on farms and came from larger families with low or middle income.

(8) More parents of vo-ag seniors than of nonvo-ag seniors exhibited low levels of formal education.

(9) Most seniors in both groups desired to obtain higher levels of education than their parents.

(10) More parents of vo-ag seniors than of nonvo-ag seniors exhibited indifferent or negative attitudes toward their sons continuing their education beyond high school.

(11) More parents of nonvo-ag seniors than of vo-ag seniors desired their sons to obtain Bachelors' or higher degrees.

(12) More parents of vo-ag seniors than of nonvo-ag seniors desired their sons to attend business schools, vocational schools or junior colleges.

(13) More parents of seniors in the vo-ag group than the nonvo-ag group did not desire their sons to obtain formal education beyond high school.

(14) Most seniors in both groups were influenced most in their educational aspirations by immediate members of their families.

(15) More vo-ag seniors than nonvo-ag seniors were influenced in their educational aspirations by teachers.

(16) More vo-ag seniors than nonvo-ag seniors would finance the major portion of their education beyond high school by working, either part-time or full-time.

(17) More nonvo-ag seniors than vo-ag seniors would rely on parents or scholarships to finance the major portion of their education beyond high school.

(18) Science and mathematics were the subjects which seemed to have the most influence on the educational aspirations of nonvo-ag seniors.

(19) Vo-ag and mathematics were the subjects which seemed to have the most influence on the educational aspirations of vo-ag seniors.

(20) More vo-ag seniors than nonvo-ag seniors selected their educational aspiration levels in the early years of high school.

(21) More vo-ag seniors than nonvo-ag seniors stated that lack of interest or lack of ability probably would be major obstacles toward reaching their educational aspiration levels.

## B. Family Influence

Specific data revealed in this study seem to indicate that the dominant influence in most individuals' educational aspiration/expectation level is the immediate family. Some families tend to produce positive influence on the educational aspiration/expectation level, where others exert negative influences. Parents with below eighth grade educational attainment tend to be more satisfied with their educational level than parents with higher levels of education, according to perceptions of their sons. Generally, sons believed their parents wanted them to obtain more but not much more education than they themselves had received. The exception was found in the group of parents who had completed high school, but who had no formal education beyond. These parents tended to have very high educational aspirations for their sons.

One of the strongest implications of this research is that students with relatively low educational aspirations and expectations are receiving little or no encouragement from their families to continue their formal education beyond high school. These students are apparently turning to groups outside the family for guidance and in too many

instances are not receiving it.

C. Peer Group Influence

Evidently, when seniors with low levels of educational aspirations and expectations received indifferent or negative educational influences at home they turned to their peer group for encouragement. However, it was noted from individual responses in separate schools that the peers the seniors apparently turned to came from families in the same educational and socio-economic categories. The results were strikingly similar in educational level desired among students from disadvantaged backgrounds within the same school.

D. School Influence

One of the most alarming facets of this study was that many seniors with low educational aspirations and expectation levels were not being influenced by the school atmosphere to aspire to some type of formal training beyond high school. Apparently the vacuum caused by the home environment is not being filled by the school. The influence of the school could be supplemented in some degree to off-set the negative family and peer influences on these individuals if vo-ag instructors and other schoolpersonnel were apprised of the situation.

There are strong implications that school personnel could do more to increase all students' educational aspirations and expectations and to decrease many individuals' educational aspiration/expectation differential by acquainting them with programs which they might enter after high school (other than college degree programs) by indicating benefits they could receive from continuing their formal education, and by pointing out methods by which they could finance additional formal education beyond high school.

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# VI. APPENDIX

A Questionnaire on the

EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS, EXPECTATIONS
AND ABILITIES OF RURAL MALE
HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

PART A - Personal

1. Size of high school:
   ( ) 1. less than 200 ( ) 2. more than 200
2. Vocational agricultural training:
   ( ) 1. none ( ) 3. 2 years ( ) 5. 4 years
   ( ) 2. 1 year ( ) 4. 3 years
3. Age:
   ( ) 1. 16 or less ( ) 2. 17 ( ) 3. 18 ( ) 4. 19 or more
4. Health:
   ( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor
5. Vision:
   ( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor
6. Hearing:
   ( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor
7. Physical defects:
   ( ) 1. None ( ) 2. Minor ( ) 3. Serious ( ) 4. Major
8. I live in:
   ( ) 1. the country on a farm
   ( ) 2. the country, but not on a farm
   ( ) 3. a small town (less than 2,500 population)
   ( ) 4. a large town (2,500 to 10,000 population)
9. Parents are:
   ( ) 1. both living ( ) 3. father dead ( ) 5. separated
   ( ) 2. both dead ( ) 4. mother dead ( ) 6. divorced
10. Father's occupation is (or was) _____.
11. Mother has (or had):
   ( ) 1. a full-time job outside the home
   ( ) 2. a part-time job outside the home
   ( ) 3. no job outside the home
12. Father's annual income is:
   ( ) 1. less than $999 ( ) 6. $5,000 - $5,999
   ( ) 2. $1,000 - $1,999 ( ) 7. $6,000 - $6,999
   ( ) 3. $2,000 - $2,999 ( ) 8. $7,000 - $7,999
   ( ) 4. $3,000 - $3,999 ( ) 9. $8,000 - or more
   ( ) 5. $4,000 - $4,999 ( ) 10. I don't know
13. If your mother works outside the home, her annual income is:
   ( ) 1. less than $999 ( ) 5. $4,000 - $4,999
   ( ) 2. $1,000 - $1,999 ( ) 6. $5,000 - $5,999
   ( ) 3. $2,000 - $2,999 ( ) 7. $6,000 - or more
   ( ) 4. $3,000 - $3,999 ( ) 8. I don't know
14. How many brothers and sisters do you have:
   ( ) 1. none ( ) 3. 3 or 4 ( ) 5. 7 or 8
   ( ) 2. 1 or 2 ( ) 4. 5 or 6 ( ) 6. 9 or more
15. I consider my parents to be:
   ( ) 1. important people in the community
   ( ) 2. average people in the community
   ( ) 3. unimportant people in the community
16. My parents are considered by most people in the community to be:
   ( ) 1. important people
   ( ) 2. average people
   ( ) 3. unimportant people

17. The girls I would like to date are from:
    ( ) 1. important families ( ) 3. unimportant families
    ( ) 2. average families
18. The girls I would like to date live in:
    ( ) 1. the country on a farm
    ( ) 2. the country, but not on a farm
    ( ) 3. a small town (less than 2,500 population)
    ( ) 4. a large town (2,500 to 10,000 population)
19. I consider myself to be a:
    ( ) 1. popular person ( ) 3. unpopular person
    ( ) 2. average person
20. I make friends:
    ( ) 1. easily ( ) 2. fairly easily ( ) 3. with difficulty

PART B - Educational

1. Father's education:
    ( ) 1. Did not attend school
    ( ) 2. 8 grades or less
    ( ) 3. 9 to 11 grades
    ( ) 4. completed high school
    ( ) 5. Vocational or Business school
    ( ) 6. College (3 years or less)
    ( ) 7. College (Bachelor's degree)
    ( ) 8. College (Master's degree)
    ( ) 9. College (Doctor's degree)
    ( ) 10. I don't know
2. Father thinks the amount of education he obtained is:
    ( ) 1. excellent ( ) 3. satisfactory ( ) 5. poor
    ( ) 2. good ( ) 4. fair ( ) 6. very poor
3. I believe that father's amount of education is (or was):
    ( ) 1. excellent ( ) 3. satisfactory ( ) 5. poor
    ( ) 2. good ( ) 4. fair ( ) 6. very poor
4. I desire to:
    ( ) 1. obtain more education than father
    ( ) 2. obtain the same amount of education as father
    ( ) 3. obtain less education than father
5. As to continuing my education after high school, father
    ( ) 1. encourages me to obtain more education
    ( ) 2. never says much about it
    ( ) 3. discourages me about obtaining more education
    ( ) 4. feels I should go to work after high school
6. Father would like me to attain the following level of education:
    ( ) 1. Finish high school
    ( ) 2. Business school
    ( ) 3. Vocational school
    ( ) 4. College (3 years or less)
    ( ) 5. College (Bachelor's degree)
    ( ) 6. College (Master's degree)
    ( ) 7. College (Doctor's degree)
7. Mother's education:
    ( ) 1. Did not attend school
    ( ) 2. 8 grades or less
    ( ) 3. 9 to 11 grades
    ( ) 4. completed high school
    ( ) 5. Vocational or Business school
    ( ) 6. College (3 years or less)
    ( ) 7. College (Bachelor's degree)
    ( ) 8. College (Master's degree)
    ( ) 9. College (Doctor's degree)
    ( ) 10. I don't know

8. Mother thinks the amount of education she received is:
   ( ) 1. excellent ( ) 3. satisfactory ( ) 5. poor
   ( ) 2. good ( ) 4. fair ( ) 6. very poor
9. I believe that mother's education is ( or was):
   ( ) 1. excellent ( ) 3. satisfactory ( ) 5. poor
   ( ) 2. good ( ) 4. fair ( ) 6. very poor
10. I desire to:
   ( ) 1. obtain more education than mother
   ( ) 2. obtain the same amount of education as mother
   ( ) 3. obtain less education than mother
11. As to continuing my education after high school, mother
   ( ) 1. encourages me to obtain more education
   ( ) 2. never says much about it.
   ( ) 3. discourages me about obtaining more education
   ( ) 4. feels I should go to work after high school
12. Mother would like me to attain the following level of education:
   ( ) 1. Finish high school ( ) 5. College (Bachelor's degree)
   ( ) 2. Business school ( ) 6. College (Master's degree)
   ( ) 3. Vocational school ( ) 7. College (Doctor's degree)
   ( ) 4. College (3 years or less)
13. Check one level of education in each column:

| Education | I would like to attain this level | I will probably attain this level |
|---|---|---|
| College (Doctor's degree) | | |
| College (Master's degree) | | |
| College (Bachelor's degree) | | |
| College (3 years of less) | | |
| Vocational School | | |
| Business School | | |
| Finish High School | | |

14. Which one of the following persons had the <u>most</u> influence in helping you decide on the amount of education you desire?
   ( ) 1. Father ( ) 4. Sister ( ) 7. Minister
   ( ) 2. Mother ( ) 5. Other relative ( ) 8. Teachers
   ( ) 3. Brother ( ) 6. Friend ( ) 9. Others
15. When did you make your educational choice?
   ( ) 1. 9th grade ( ) 3. 11th grade
   ( ) 2. 10th grade ( ) 4. 12th grade
16. If you will not continue your education after high school, the main reason will be:
   ( ) 1. lack of interest ( ) 3. lack of finances
   ( ) 2. lack of ability ( ) 4. Other
17. Are any of your friends planning to continue their education?
   ( ) 1. most of them ( ) 3. a few of them
   ( ) 2. some of them ( ) 4. none of them
18. I desire to continue my education because:
   ( ) 1. it will make me a better person
   ( ) 2. it will allow me to make more money
   ( ) 3. it will allow me to gain more respect
   ( ) 4. everyone else is

19. How would you finance the largest portion of your continued education?
( ) 1. Parents ( ) 4. Working full-time
( ) 2. Scholarship ( ) 5. Borrowing
( ) 3. Working part-time ( ) 6. Other _____

20. As to financial help from your parents after high school, they would be:
( ) 1. willing,and able ( ) 3. unwilling,but able
( ) 2. willing, but unable ( ) 4. unwilling,and unable

21. Do you feel that it is important to:
( ) 1. sacrifice all of your pleasures in order to be sure of an education
( ) 2. sacrifice some of your pleasures in order to be sure of an education
( ) 3. refuse to let plans for future education interfere with enjoyment of the present

22. If you plan to continue your education, where will you obtain it?
( ) 1. Mississippi ( ) 5. East
( ) 2. Ala., La., or Tenn. ( ) 6. Midwest
( ) 3. Other Southern States ( ) 7. West
( ) 4. Southwest ( ) 8. Foreign Country

23. Subject liked most in high school:
( ) 1. Business ( ) 5. Social Studies
( ) 2. English ( ) 6. Trade and Industrial Education
( ) 3. Mathematics
( ) 4. Science ( ) 7. Vocational Agriculture
( ) 8. Others

24. Subject liked beast in high school:
( ) 1. Business ( ) 5. Social Studies
( ) 2. English ( ) 6. Trade and Industrial Education
( ) 3. Mathematics
( ) 4. Science ( ) 7. Vocational Agriculture
( ) 8. Others

25. What subject had the most influence on your educational choice?
( ) 1. Business ( ) 5. Social Studies
( ) 2. English ( ) 6. Trade & Industrial Education
( ) 3. Mathematics ( ) 7. Vocational Agriculture
( ) 4. Science ( ) 8. Others

26. As far as grades in high school are concerned, I am
( ) 1. In the upper 10% of the class ( ) 3. about average
( ) 2. In the upper 33% of the class ( ) 4. in lower 33% of class

27. Reading ability:
( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor

28. Writing ability:
( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor

29. Speaking ability:
( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor

30. Mathematical ability:
( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor

31. Scientific ability:
( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor

32. Business ability:
( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor
33. Agricultural ability:
( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor
34. Trade and Industrial ability:
( ) 1. Excellent ( ) 2. Good ( ) 3. Fair ( ) 4. Poor
35. When I finish high school, my overall aberage will probably be:
( ) 1. "A" ( ) 2. "B" ( ) 3. "C" ( ) 4. "D"